

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representatives Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Mike Quigley (D-Ill.) today announced an unprecedented level of federal funding for the restoration and protection of the Great Lakes. By a unanimous vote late last night, the U.S. House Appropriations Committee approved \$475 million for the U.S. Environment Protection Agency's Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, an interagency effort to clean up toxic substances like mercury and PCBs in the lakes, fight invasive species, restore habitats, preserve wildlife areas and boost accountability, monitoring and local partnerships. The funding was included in the U.S. Department of Interior Appropriations Bill for 2010, which now goes before the full House for consideration.

"In 2005, Congressman Vern Ehlers of Michigan and I authored the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act – the blueprint for an interagency effort to preserve and protect the drinking water for more than 30 million Americans," said Congressman Mark Kirk, co-chair of the Congressional Great Lakes Task Force. "We have now provided the resources to make that blueprint a reality. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will help make our water cleaner, keep beaches open in the summer and create new jobs throughout the region. Approximately \$50 billion in long-term benefits will result from implementing the recommendations of the Great Lakes Collaboration Strategy, including increasing property values as pollution is removed. I particularly want to thank Cam Davis, whose leadership at the Alliance for the Great Lakes made this historic funding possible. I look forward to continue our work together as he begins his new position as the Great Lakes Coordinator for the U.S. EPA."

"There is nothing more fundamental than the safety of the water we drink and the air we breathe," Congressman Quigley said. "Our lakes and rivers may have geographic boundary lines, but they don't have political lines drawn through them. I'm proud to work with Rep. Kirk and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this very significant issue that affects all of us. Cleaning out contamination, creating green jobs, and preserving our natural environment has long-term benefits for everyone, and passing the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative will provide resources to help ensure that our children, and all future generations, have access to a cleaner,

greener region.”

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy was developed over the last decade by more than 1,500 stakeholders in the region. At least 60 percent of the restoration funding will be distributed to nonfederal entities through existing contracts and grants to organizations working on the ground to clean up the lakes. Approximately \$65 million is available for monitoring, data collection and reporting to ensure a results-based approach.

Additional resources include:

Toxic Substances and Areas of Concern (\$147 million)

Toxic substances, such as mercury and Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are found throughout the Great Lakes. The U.S. has identified 26 “Areas of Concern” that contain these types of pollutants that degrade the quality of the local ecosystem and threaten human health. The Restoration Initiative will:

- Clean more than one million cubic yards of contaminated sediments.
- Provide resources to clean up pollution in 400 impaired watersheds.

- De-list five Areas of Concern.

Aquatic Invasive Species (\$60 million)

The Great Lakes are home to more than 180 invasive species that threaten to destabilize the natural ecosystem of the lakes, including zebra mussels and sea lampreys. These non-native plants and animals compete with indigenous wildlife and reduce the genetic diversity of the lakes. Of particular concern is the Asian Carp, which has been found in waterways near Lake Michigan and aggressively pushes out indigenous fish species. The Restoration Initiative will:

- Encourage the deployment of six ballast water sampling and treatment technologies to prevent invasive species from entering the lakes.
- Target up to 50 non-native species that have the potential to invade our lakes.

Nonpoint Source Pollution (\$98 million)

Pollution and high bacteria levels near the shoreline of the lakes result in unhealthy swimming conditions and beach closures. Causes of these high bacteria levels include sewage dumping and fertilizer runoff. An EPA pilot epidemiological study estimated that nearly 300 people could expect to contract a respiratory illness after swimming in Lake Michigan on a summer weekend due to elevated pathogen levels in the water, including the bacteria *E. coli*. According to a University of Chicago study, swim bans at Chicago beaches cost the local economy about \$2.4 million each year in lost revenue. The Restoration Initiative will:

- Identify and clean up sources of contaminants at over 100 beaches.

Habitat and Wildlife Restoration (\$105 million)

Development along the lakes, invasive species and pollution has degraded many ecosystems throughout the region, putting species at risk and damaging industries dependent upon the lakes, including fishing and tourism. The Restoration Act will:

- Remove 40 barriers to fish passage.
- Protect and restore 9,000 acres of wetland and other habitats near lakes, streams and coasts.
- Restore 1,000 miles of streams to improve fish habitat by improving passage and stabilizing erosion.
- Restore more than 1,500 acres of wetlands.

“I look forward to working with Congressman Quigley to build broad bipartisan support for restoration funding in the full House,” Congressman Kirk said. “With this foundation of support for the Great Lakes in place, it’s my hope that Congress quickly considers the Kirk-Lipinski ban

on Great Lakes sewage dumping (H.R. 54). We need to underscore the message that the public gave British Petroleum in 2007 after the company backed away from its plan to dump more pollution into Lake Michigan – nothing is more important than the safety of our drinking water.”